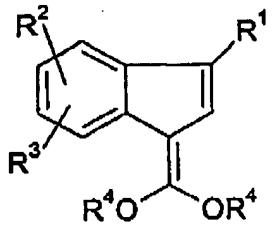
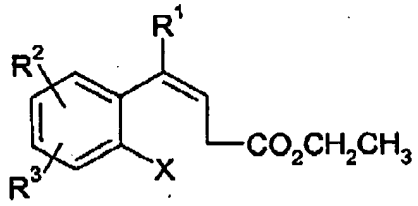
IN THE CLAIMS (37 CFR 1.121 Revised)

1. (currently amended) An improved process for preparing a compound of the formula



I

which comprises (a) conducting a solvent-free reaction between a compound of formula



II

and a monohydric alcohol of formula R^4 OH wherein R^4 is C_1 to C_6 alkyl or a dihydric alcohol wherein said dihydric alcohol is selected from the group consisting of ethylene glycol, 1,3-propylene glycol, and 1,2-propylene glycol, in the presence of sulfuric acid; and

(b) treating the reaction product with [a base] ammonium hydroxide and water to neutralize residual sulfuric acid;

wherein R^1 is an electron withdrawing group selected from the group consisting of cyano, alkoxycarboxyl, alkylcarbonyl, aryl, nitro, trifluoromethyl, and sulfonyl;

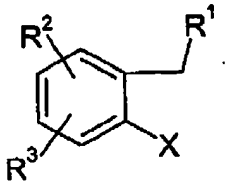
R^2 and R^3 are selected independently from hydrogen, C_1-C_5 alkyl, C_1-C_5 alkoxy, trifluoromethyl, halogen, sulfonyl alkyl, alkyamino, amide, ester, aryl-alkyl, and aryl-alkoxy;

[or R^2 and R^3 together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a monocyclic or bicyclic ring;]

and X is selected from the group consisting of chlorine, bromine, and iodine.

2. (cancelled)

3. (currently amended) The process according to claim 1 wherein said compound of formula II is prepared by (a) reacting a compound of formula III



III

with ethyl 3-ethoxyacrylate in the presence of a catalyst, wherein said catalyst is a mixture of palladium II acetate, tricylcohexylphosphine and [base] sodium t-butoxide; and an inert water miscible solvent selected from the group consisting of tetrahydrofuran, 2-methyltetrahydrofuran, and 1,2-dimethoxy ethane and (b) completely removing said solvent upon completion of said reaction, wherein said solvent is removed by distillation; wherein

R^1 is an electron withdrawing group selected from the group consisting of cyano, alkoxycarboxyl, alkylcarbonyl, arylcarbonyl, aryl, nitro, trifluoromethyl, and sulfonyl; and X is selected from the group consisting of chlorine, bromine, and iodine; and

R^2 and R^3 are selected independently from hydrogen, C_1 to C_5 alkyl, C_1 to C_5 alkoxy, trifluoromethyl, halogen, sulfonyl alkyl, alkyamino, amide, ester, aryl-alkyl, and aryl-alkoxy[;

or R^2 and R^3 together with carbon atoms to which they are attached form a monocyclic or bicyclic ring].

4. (cancelled)

5. (cancelled)

6. (cancelled)

7. (currently amended) The process according to claim [[6]] 3 wherein said dihydric alcohol is ethylene glycol.

8. (cancelled)

9. (currently amended) The process according to claim [[8]] 3 wherein said inert water miscible organic solvent is tetrahydrofuran.

10. (cancelled)

11. (previously presented) The process according to claim 1 wherein the compound of the formula I is 3-[1,3] dioxolan-2-ylidene-3H-indene-1-carbonitrile.

12. (cancelled)

13. (cancelled)

14. (previously presented) The process according to claim 1 wherein said dihydric alcohol is ethylene glycol and said base is ammonium hydroxide.

15. (previously presented) The process according to claim 14 wherein said compound of formula I is 3-[1,3] dioxolan-2-ylidene-3H-indene-1-carbonitrile.

16. (previously presented) The process according to claim 3 wherein said catalyst is a mixture of palladium II acetate, tricyclohexylphosphine, and a sodium t-butoxide, said inert miscible miscible solvent is tetrahydrofuran; and wherein said alcohol is a dihydric alcohol selected from ethylene glycol.

17. (previously presented) The process according to claim 16 wherein said compound of formula I is 3-[1,3] dioxolan-2-ylidene-3H-indene-1-carbonitrile.